

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - September 22, 2006

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today that four defendants were sentenced in federal district court in San Diego on felony alien smuggling charges stemming from a February 10, 2006 incident where a large group of aliens crossed the United States-Mexico border illegally and loaded into three vans four miles east of the United States Port of Entry, San Ysidro, California. All three vans attempted, unsuccessfully, to evade apprehension by United States Border Patrol agents. One of the three vans drove the wrong way on Airway Road, crashed through a guard rail and rolled over several times resulting in injuries to several of the van's 27 occupants. Border Patrol agents arrested a total of 98 aliens who had been traveling in the three vans, including the suspected drivers.

Six individuals were indicted by a federal grand jury on February 22, 2006 for their alleged roles in the smuggling attempt. All six pleaded guilty on May 22, 2006 with two defendants being sentenced last August and the remaining four being sentenced today. Those defendants who were sentenced on September 22 are:

Jose Espinoza-Garcia, who pled guilty to Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting, was sentenced to a 52-month prison term followed by 3 years supervised release for his role in driving the van that crashed through the guard rail and rolled over.

Pascual Lopez-Godina, who pled guilty to Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting for his role in driving one of the vans containing approximately 34 illegal aliens, as well as two counts of Assault on a Federal Officer, was sentenced to 63 months in prison followed by 3 years supervised release. One of the assault counts alleged that Lopez-Godina drove in the direction of United States Border Patrol Agent Mark Hansen, causing Hansen to take evasive action to avoid being hit by the van. The second assault count alleged that defendant hit United States Border Patrol Agent Blake Bellamy's marked Border Patrol vehicle causing it to fishtail.

Rodrigo Briones-Gonzalez, who pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, was sentenced to 18 months in prison followed by 3 years supervised release for his role in assisting in the loading of aliens into one of the vans and giving directions to the driver.

Jaime Briones-Gonzalez, who pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, was sentenced to 15 months in prison followed by 2 years supervised release for his role in giving directions to the aliens in one of the vans.

The defendants sentenced on August 10, 2006 were:

Jose Jesus Correa-Avila, who pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, was sentenced to 24 months in prison followed by 3 years supervised release for his role in driving one of the vans containing approximately 36 illegal aliens.

Jose de Jesus Guzman-Fregozo, who pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, was sentenced to 18 months in prison for his role in assisting in the loading of aliens into one of the vans.

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam said, “Alien smugglers now know that if they run from law enforcement, they will do more time.” She commended the United States Border Patrol for its work on the investigation of this case.

All of the defendants were sentenced by the Honorable Jeffery T. Miller, United States District Judge.

DEFENDANTS

Pascual Lopez-Godina
Jose Espinoza-Garcia
Jose Jesus Correa-Avila
Jose De Jesus Guzman-Fregozo
Jaime Briones-Gonzalez
Rodrigo Briones-Gonzalez

SUMMARY OF CHARGES AND PENALTIES

Pascual Lopez-Godina (Counts 2, 27, and 28)

Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting, Title 18, United States Code Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Title 18, United States Code, Section 2

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| Mandatory Minimum Penalty: | 3 years in prison |
| Maximum Penalty: | 10 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine |

Assault on a Federal Officer, Title 18, United States Code, Section 111(a) and (b) (two counts)

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| Maximum Penalty: | 20 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine per count |
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Jose Espinoza-Garcia (Count 12)

Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting, Title 18, United States Code Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Title 18, United States Code, Section 2

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|----------------------------|--|
| Mandatory Minimum Penalty: | 3 years in prison |
| Maximum Penalty: | 10 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine |

Jose Jesus Correa-Avila (Count 7)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II).

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| Maximum Penalty: | 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine |
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Jose De Jesus Guzman-Fregozo (Count 21)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II).

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Jaime Briones-Gonzalez (Count 17)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II).

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Rodrigo Briones-Gonzalez (Count 17)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II).

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

AGENCY

United States Border Patrol